

Testimony of Shannon Rooney  
Connecticut School Counselor Association  
*in regards to*

**H.B. No. 5037- AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.**

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education  
Public Hearing - February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Shannon Rooney and I am from Glastonbury, CT. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037 - An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023. Specifically, I am here today to testify about the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to one.

As a student in my school counseling practicum in Manchester, CT, as well as being a full-time teacher in Vernon, CT, I can attest that since March 2020, there has been an extraneous need for more school counselors. Every day in school, I witness students struggling with issues which impact their academic and emotional well-being. Some of these issues include not being able to properly and efficiently resolve peer conflict, experiencing familial issues at home such as food or housing security, decreases in overall emotional regulation, and truancy.

The average school counselor in the state of CT has a caseload of 1:457, whereas ASCA states that the recommended average is 1:250. 1:457 is far too much in order to best meet the unique needs of all students. On top of this, because of the astronomical shortage of teachers, many school counselors and other support staff are pulled to cover classes, which is not an appropriate role for a school counselor. This, in turn, takes time away from the preventative work that school counselors do. This includes meeting with students for group and individual counseling, and facilitating classroom guidance lessons for all students. These are all direct services that school counselors provide that are prevention-based in nature. Students simply are not able to have adequate access to their counselors due to their excessive caseloads and having to respond to crisis situations throughout the day.

Currently, the middle school in Manchester where I am completing my practicum has an average counselor to student ratio of 1:200. Since the first week of my practicum, I noticed that although social-emotional issues with students still are extremely pertinent, smaller caseloads are much more manageable and do make a difference to the overall well-being of students. Although the school counselors still frequently respond to crisis situations, they are able to meet with the majority of students every day due to their lower-than-average caseloads.

Because of the overwhelming need for more support staff to best support students' mental health, I would ask that the appropriations committee consider appropriating money specifically for school counseling and the hiring of more school counselors. This is important to the future of our children in CT; they need the proactive, preventative services that school counselors provide in order to be able to best function academically and socially.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Shannon Rooney

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